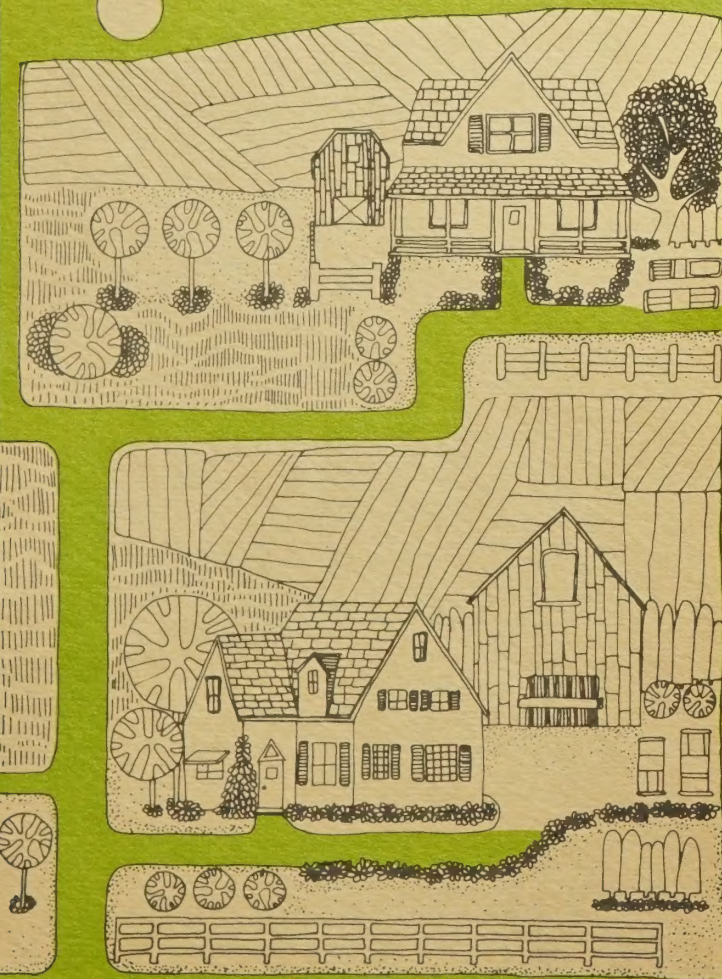
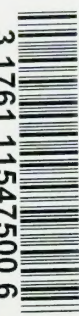


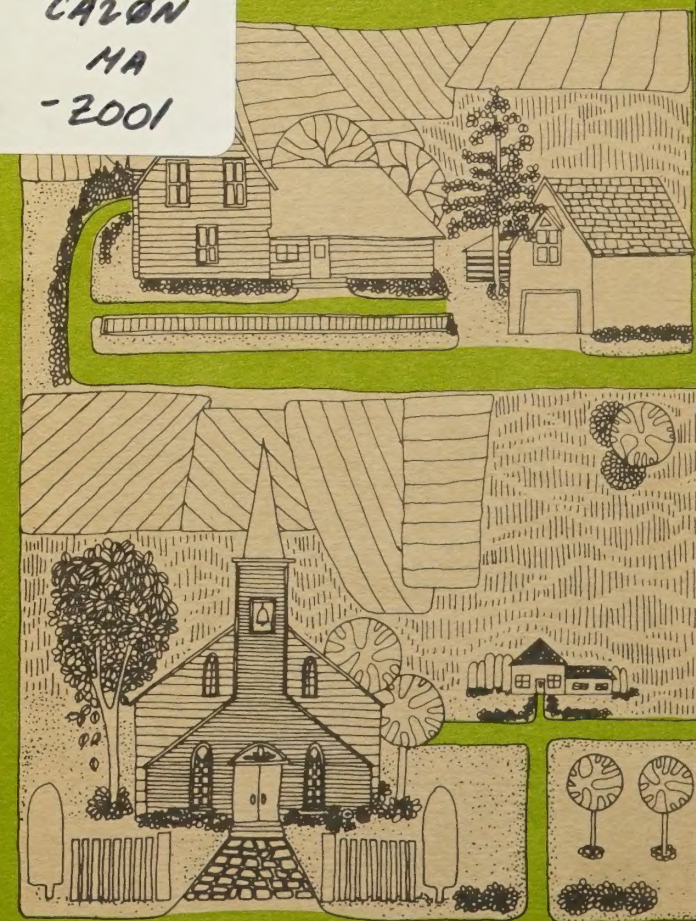
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Rural Route to planning

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What do we value?

We live in times of urbanization, affluence and rapid change. What we do not protect can quickly be lost. Where land is concerned, the loss can be forever.

To rural municipalities, facing increasing pressures from urban populations, these matters are of crucial importance.

Land is the rural municipality's principal resource. Land use, then, must be its principal concern. But all rural land is not suitable or even needed for agriculture. This is where alternative possibilities for the use of land come in. This is where the choices must be made wisely if rural residents are to have the kind of communities they want. This, too, is where the long-range effects of today's decisions must be fully understood or the desired communities will not materialize.

Most rural municipalities in Ontario today are under pressure from developments of one kind or another. Congestion in the cities and the high price of land lead ever more urbanites to seek accommodation "in the country". The Province's excellent highway system and its rapidly growing urban population make it nearly impossible for any rural areas to remain immune from the pressures.

Urban development has persuasive attractions. The municipality's assessment revenue rises; construction jobs are created; retail business may be stimulated. And, of course, the individual farmer who sells lots makes a profit. But urban development can create problems that rapidly eat up the financial gains.

The solution to this dilemma is not to prevent development but to guide it so that the benefits are obtained and the problems avoided.

To better understand the need for planning, we should look at the difficulties that can arise from unplanned growth.

The country home

Urbanization is a process with deceptively humble beginnings. Let's take the case of a farmer who sells a piece of his frontage for someone to build an urban-style house on. He receives a comparatively high price for a comparatively small piece of property. He and his neighbours are tempted to sell other pieces. Initially the municipal council may favour these sales for undeniably they increase the municipality's assessment income. Soon, however, what was a country road has come to look like a suburban street.

The occupants of these houses are essentially urban people. They expect city-type services: trouble-free water supplies and sewage disposal; well-paved and plowed roads; convenient schools. If these facilities are to be supplied, the tax rate must be raised. The increase in taxes often must be borne by everyone in the municipality, not just by those who will receive the services. In other words, the new residents expect the advantages not only of country living but of city living as well: and the whole municipality may be expected to pay for this way of life.

In the case of piped services, the municipality may find the seepage from septic tanks so serious that some costly action will have to be taken. The choice between polluted ground-water and piped services can be an uncomfortable dilemma for a municipal council with limited financial resources. A number of such developments could all but bankrupt a municipality.

When houses come to line a highway, speed limits must be reduced and the danger of accidents increases. Eventually the highway may have to be rerouted.

Transporting children to school by bus now takes a large slice of the budget of many rural school boards in areas where development proceeded without guidance.

Industry in rural areas

Industrialization is another form of urban development invading rural areas. Manufacturing firms seeking cheaper land are often encouraged to locate in a rural community. Again the immediate prospects look bright. The company will pay a good price for the land and will bring in badly needed assessment. Moreover, jobs may be created.

If this situation arises, the municipality must keep in mind that some industries are "noxious" — that is, they pollute air, water and land. Others may employ such large numbers of people that the entire social character of the community could be changed by a flood of workers from outside.

Any large increase in population means more services must be provided. An industry may need only a minimum of services, but the people who work for it require schools, roads, housing, and parks, to say nothing of piped water and sewage disposal systems.

The vacation home

A third form of urbanization is associated with recreation — the cottage development that occurs in lake districts. Here, too, municipal assessment benefits, and often the land is only marginally productive as farmland. If care is not taken, however, malfunctioning septic tanks may pollute the lakes, and local residents may lose all access to lake frontages. These conditions can be incredibly costly to correct. An added complication is the widespread use of snowmobiles. Many people now use their summer cottages as year-round vacation homes, placing added strain on sewage facilities. Moreover, year-round use often leads to demands for plowed roads.

Even the argument that local business will benefit does not always stand up. Studies have shown that cottagers frequently bring most of their supplies with them from the city.

What can we do?

These events are not bad in themselves, but they must be controlled. Thought must be given to the implications of any urban aspects in a rural municipality.

The most effective tool for guiding the future of a community is the official plan, backed up by an implementing zoning by-law. A community that has a well designed official plan will not find itself saddled with development that is incompatible with the aspirations of its citizens, or that it cannot afford.

Part of the preparation for an official plan involves an assessment of the community's resources and present state of development. Once these are known the community can review the alternatives and decide just what it wants to look like ten or twenty years from now. This decision can then be implemented by a comprehensive zoning by-law. If changing conditions warrant, the official plan can always be amended to accommodate new situations.

The Community Planning Branch has a number of leaflets explaining the nature and purposes of the official plan, the duties of planning boards and how to set them up. Staff members are always ready to discuss any problems with any municipality that requests assistance. For further information, contact the Director, Community Planning Branch, Department of Municipal Affairs, 801 Bay Street, Toronto 181.

Remember...
it's YOUR community

**It's up to you to keep it
a place you'd like to live in!**